

# THE IMAGINATION STATION

Adventures in  
ODYSSEY

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

12

## Danger on a Silent Night

MARIANNE HERING • NANCY I. SANDERS

*Danger on a*  
*Silent Night*

**BOOK 12**

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To Arman and Elham,

Just as the wise men did, you started your journey  
in Persia. Then, oh glorious day! You found your Savior, the King of the Jews. May

God continue to bless  
you with the joy of His presence as you share the  
good news with others!

—NIS

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# Chapter 1

## Present Problems

Patrick's boots crunched in the snow on the sidewalk. He was on his way to Whit's End. His cousin Beth walked beside him.

Patrick's nose felt frozen. He clutched a small gift bag in his hand. It had a big red bow on it.

"I still think your decision is weird," Patrick said to Beth.

Beth shook her head. "Mr. Whittaker will understand."

"But *I* don't understand," Patrick said. His words turned into little clouds around his mouth. "I'm bringing him a present. But you're going to tell him that you're not giving any presents this year. To *anyone*."

Beth frowned. "You left out the reason *why* I'm not giving presents. *It's because I'm saving my money to give to the poor.*" She said the last part in a dramatic voice.

Patrick opened the door to Whit's End. The bell on the door jingled as he stepped inside. Beth followed close behind.

Mr. Whittaker stood behind the counter. He was filling a mug with hot cocoa. He looked up and smiled. "Merry Christmas!" he

said.

“Merry Christmas!” Patrick and Beth said together.

Patrick walked to the counter and held out the bag to Whit. “My mom baked these for you,” he said.

Whit took the bag and looked inside. He closed his eyes and sniffed deeply. “I *love* gingerbread cookies. Thank you,” he said.

“You’re welcome,” Patrick said. He glanced over at Beth.

Beth looked away.

“Do you mind if I share these?” Whit asked Patrick. He put the gift on a shelf behind him. “If I eat them all myself, I’ll gain weight. Then I might have to ask for a new belt for Christmas.”

“Sure,” Patrick said. “They’re yours. You can do whatever you want with them.”

The cousins took off their mittens and sat at the counter.

Whit busied himself with more mugs of hot chocolate. “Are both of you ready for Christmas?” he asked them.

“Almost,” Patrick said.

“I am,” said Beth.

Whit raised his eyebrows. “You’ve already done *all* your Christmas shopping?” he asked her.



Patrick looked at Beth to see how she would reply.

“I’m not shopping for Christmas this year,” Beth said. “I’m not giving gifts.”

“Oh?” Whit said.

Beth lifted her chin proudly. “I’m giving my money to needy families,” she said.

Whit looked impressed. “Well, that’s a sacrificial thing to do,” he said.

“She didn’t say she wouldn’t *take* any gifts,” Patrick said in a sharp tone. “She said she isn’t *giving* any.”

“I’m not asking for any gifts this year. I’m planning to tell my family and friends not to give me anything” said Beth. She frowned at Patrick. “I don’t want any money spent on me. It should go to the poor instead.”

Patrick looked at Whit. “Help me, Mr. Whittaker,” he said. “What’s it going to be like with no Christmas presents under the tree? It’s crazy.”

Whit rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “You don’t always have to *buy* gifts,” he said and then turned to Beth. “You could make something by hand—like decorate a picture frame or knit a scarf.”



“I would still have to buy the supplies,” Beth said.

Patrick put his face in his hands and groaned. “You can’t have Christmas without presents. It’s . . . it’s . . . *tradition*.”

“It wasn’t always tradition,” Beth said. Then she looked doubtful and asked Whit, “Was it?”

Whit put the mugs of hot chocolate on a tray. “Let me deliver these drinks. Then I’ll *show* you the answer,” he said.

“Show us?” Patrick asked. Then he realized what Whit was saying. “An Imagination Station adventure?”

Whit chuckled as he walked away with the tray.

Patrick looked at Beth. Beth seemed excited for a second. Then her expression changed to serious. “This won’t change anything,” she said firmly.

“Are you sure about that?” Patrick asked.

“You’ll see,” Beth said.

[hiatus]

Whit led the cousins down a set of stairs to his basement workshop. They crossed the room to a large machine. It looked like the front of a helicopter. The Imagination Station! Patrick patted its side and felt the cool metal.

The Imagination Station was one of Whit's inventions. It was kind of like a time machine. It let kids experience history for themselves.

Whit pushed a button, and the door slid open. The cousins climbed inside and sat in the seats.

Whit pushed several keys on the machine's control panel. The Imagination Station started to hum. Lights flashed on and off.

"I hope you enjoy yourselves," Whit said.

"What will this tell me about giving gifts?" Beth asked.

Whit smiled and waved. "Push the red button when you're ready," he said. The doors slid closed.

Patrick reached out and pushed the red button.

The Imagination Station started to shake. It seemed to move forward. Then it rumbled. Then it whirred.

Beth gasped.

Patrick felt the machine speed up. It zoomed along through a kind of tunnel. The tunnel seemed to get smaller and smaller.

Suddenly everything went black.

## Chapter 2

### Magic!

Patrick felt a warm glow on his face. His nose wasn't cold anymore. He blinked at the sun. Then he looked around. He was sitting on a large rock. The ground was sandy at his feet.

The Imagination Station faded away.

*I forgot to ask Mr. Whittaker where we were going,* he thought.

Patrick wondered what kind of clothes he was wearing. He always found himself in different clothes in the Imagination Station. Maybe they'd give him a clue. He looked down. He was wearing thick robes with colorful embroidery. A heavy gold necklace hung around his neck.

He noticed a hat on his head. Patrick reached up and felt cloth. A wide strip of material was twisted like a cinnamon roll. *A turban,* he thought. He touched a large jewel attached to the front of it. It was about the size of a baseball.

He searched his pockets. Whit often gave him a small gift to use in each adventure. But his pockets were empty. *Did Mr. Whittaker forget to give me something?* he wondered.

He stood up and looked around. On Patrick's left was a large open field of sand. On his right stood a row of tall, thick bushes. A few were as tall as a man. Beth was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly he heard voices coming from the other side of the bushes. They were *angry* voices.

*Uh-oh, I hope Beth isn't in trouble already,* he thought.

Patrick crept up to the bush. He spread apart some branches and peeked through the opening.

He saw two groups of men. They were standing on opposite sides of a hole in the ground. Square, flat stones lined the hole.

One group of men wore simple brown robes. A herd of twelve donkeys was gathered near them. Each donkey carried a large bundle on its back. The animals looked worn and tired. They only moved to twitch their ears.

The second group of men wore beautiful robes. Jewels decorated their clothes. The shiny gems looked like giant candy gumdrops without the sugar.

More than twenty camels stood around the men. Each camel was covered with a fancy blanket that looked like a carpet. Each blanket had dozens of long tassels. Patrick whistled to himself. These men

had money. Lots of it.

The men in brown robes were different. He remembered drawings he'd seen of trading caravans in the Middle East. The men in brown robes looked like traders.

The shouting between the two groups grew louder.

One man in a brown robe stepped forward. His fists were clenched. Then a man from the other group came closer. He pointed to the hole.

Patrick guessed the hole in the ground was a well. The two groups seemed to be fighting over it. He scanned the crowds. He was hoping to spot Beth. But he saw only the men and their animals.

A man from the wealthy-looking group tossed his hands in the air. He looked disgusted. He shook his head then turned and walked toward Patrick.

*Maybe he's seen Beth*, Patrick thought. He stepped out from behind the bush as the man approached.

The man looked surprised to see him there.

"Have you seen a girl with brown hair?" Patrick asked.

The man looked at Patrick with an odd expression. He shook his head. "A girl? No, of course I haven't," he said. "We travel only with

men.”

“What about them?” Patrick asked. He pointed to the other group of men.

“You’ll have to ask them yourself,” the man said.

Patrick looked at the arguing men. “What are they fighting about?” he asked.

“Our caravan has been traveling for days,” the man said. “Our camels need water. But the traders say the well is theirs because they were here first. We said we’d be happy to take the water *after* them. But they insist we cannot have any water at all.”

Just then, Patrick heard a man in a brown robe shout. That man shoved a man from the other group. The other man shoved back. A few other men began to throw punches. The argument was turning into a fight.

“Oh no,” the wealthy man said to Patrick.

“What can we do?” Patrick asked.

Suddenly there was a loud *ka-pow!* and a bright flash of light. A thick cloud of white smoke exploded next to the bush.

Patrick jumped and stumbled away from the explosion. He bumped into the wealthy man. The man reached out to steady him.

Several donkeys reared back. The fighting stopped. Both groups of men turned to see what had happened.

Patrick saw a white cloud of smoke. As the smoke thinned, a young man stepped forward. It seemed as if he had magically appeared. He wore a huge gold turban like a snail shell. His robes were made from shimmery fabric. He looked like a prince.

“Stop fighting and share the water!” he called out. “There is enough for all!”

Then he raised an arm toward the sky and opened his hand. There was another *ka-pow!* and cloud of smoke. The young man vanished.

The men in brown robes were amazed. Some fell to their knees.

“Magic!” they cried with fear. “They have magic!”